

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following questions and answers address problem areas that occurred with some frequency in data that were reported in previous years. Please take the time to read through these questions and answers.

1. **Question:** Must a school submit a school discipline report if the school has no incidents to report?

Answer: Yes. A completed report form must be submitted for every school in the district whether the school has incidents to report or not. If a school has no incidents to report, the “no incidents” box on the data entry screen must be checked for that school.

2. **Question:** Can data for several schools in the district be reported under one school?

Answer: No. School Discipline Data must be reported under the school where the incident occurred or where the students involved in the incident attend school. If a school has no incidents to report, the “no incidents” box on the data entry screen must be checked for that school.

3. **Question:** How would an incident be reported if the students involved each have different incident codes that pertain to them individually (example: two students rob the school office – one student carries a knife and the other student carries a gun)?

Answer: School discipline data reporting is incident driven. An incident is reported as one incident, even though you use several incident codes to describe the incident. For instance, the above case should be reported as follows: there is one incident with several incident codes that apply – 2600 (robbery), 12 (shotgun/rifle) and 20 (knife); and under that one incident, there are two student perpetrators. Because a firearm is involved in the incident, the district’s firearm policies should be followed - that is, most likely the board of trustees will determine the action taken with the students involved in the incident. For purposes of data reporting, it is unnecessary to distinguish which student carried the rifle and which carried the knife. However, action codes for this incident may be different for each student and one student may be removed for a longer period of time than the other. Because both students are involved in a “firearms” incident, the school must report for each whether the removals are for a full year or have been shortened. The school district can use some discretion on whether to report separate incidents in certain cases, but the emphasis is on the incident and what/who was involved in that incident.

4. **Question:** How should an incident be reported if the student is suspended for several days until the board of trustees can meet and then the student is expelled – should this be two incidents, one for the suspension and one for the expulsion?

Answer: No. The emphasis is on the incident and this is one incident, not two. The action code should reflect expulsion (which is the end result) and the number of days removed should reflect the total number of days suspended and expelled for that incident.

5. **Question:** If a student is expelled until the end of the school year, must the number of days be reported?

Answer: Yes. The number of school days a student is removed is a required field if the perpetrator is a student. If a student is expelled for the remainder of the year the number of school days must be determined. A full year removal, for example, from November to November, is around 180 school days.

6. **Question:** Are there certain reporting requirements when a student has brought a firearm to school?

Answer: Yes. Firearm incidents (code 11 [handgun], 12 [shotgun/rifle], or 13 [other firearms]) may be reported with an action code that reflects an out-of-school expulsion or suspension. Montana Statute (20-5-202, MCA) requires that boards of trustees must have in place a policy for expelling a student for not less than one year if the student is determined to have brought a firearm to school, except that a school board may authorize the school administration to modify the requirement for expulsion of a student on a case-by-case basis. Remember that expulsion is a disciplinary action that is only available to a board of trustees, and there must be policies in place in the school district defining the circumstances and procedures for expulsion and suspension when a firearm is involved. If a firearm is involved, each student record must show if the suspension or expulsion for that student was for a full year or was modified to less than a full year.

7. **Question:** How would an incident be reported that involves two students, each one from a different school (for example, one student from the middle school and one student from the high school)?

Answer: Since each student involved in the incident attends a different school, the incident should be reported at each school to include the student information for the student who attends that school. This would result in two incidents being reported for what was essentially one incident; however, the data would correctly indicate students at each school, which could only be reported in this method.

8. **Question:** Should an incident be reported that involves a student on the last day of school in which the student would normally be suspended or expelled, but because it's the last day of school there is no action taken?

Answer: Yes. If a student commits a violation on the last day of school that would normally result in out-of-school suspension or expulsion, more than likely the student would be removed from the school for the remainder of that last day of school. The incident should be reported and the length of removal should reflect the decimal portion of that last day of school for which the student is removed. It is important to report this incident, and using a portion of a day allows the incident to be reported.

9. **Question:** A student is involved in an incident that results in the student being expelled for a certain amount of time. The parents remove the student from school before the expulsion can be implemented. Should the incident be reported?

Answer: Yes. Even though the student was removed prior to implementation of the expulsion, this incident must still be reported along with the length of removal that would have been imposed if the student was still enrolled at the school.

10. **Question:** There is a called-in bomb threat that prompts the evacuation of the entire school. Should the number of victims include every student and staff in the school?

Answer: No. A new definition added to the glossary for the term "victim" clarifies that a victim is an individual who suffers physical or emotional injury, loss or death because of a voluntary act by another person. This would not include the inconvenience experienced by students and staff because of the evacuation of a building. Unless there was an individual who was emotionally or physically injured during a bomb threat, there would be no victims reported.